

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND 95358
BY SA NARA Date 8/20/09

HR70-14

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE
HISTORICAL
COLLECTIONS
DIVISION
HR-70-14
4-18-2012~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

RADIO PROPAGANDA REPORT

STRATEGIC SURPRISE: INDICATIONS OF A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE
IN SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE

FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

Research Series
(Intelligence Problem Study)

RS.27

11 May 1959

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 12958

Agency: CIA

Date: 9-17-99

APPROVED FOR RELEASE

*Archival Record**Return to Archives & Records Center**Immediately After Use*

MAY 26 1959 REC'D V

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NND45358
By SA NARA Date 8/30/09

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

STRATEGIC SURPRISE: INDICATIONS OF A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE
IN SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE

Contents

Summary	1
Background: The 1955 Doctrinal Revision	2
The ICBM's Impact on Doctrine	3
Treatment of Strategic Rocket as Surprise Weapon New Argument for Decisiveness of Surprise	
High Appraisal of Surprise Factor at Tactical Level	7

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Authority NND 45358
DECLASSIFIED
8/20/09
By SA NARA Date

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 May 1959

- 1 -

STRATEGIC SURPRISE: INDICATIONS OF A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE
IN SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE

Summary

This report presents the findings from a study of Soviet propaganda to determine what modifications may have been made in Soviet doctrine on surprise attack since the USSR announced acquisition of an ICBM capability in August 1957. The results are fragmentary. They are, however, suggestive of some progression beyond the doctrinal position evolved in 1955, when Stalinist doctrine was amended to accommodate to the advent of mass-destruction weapons:

1. In the Stalinist view, strategic surprise could be advantageous but in no case decisive in determining the outcome of war. Stalin posited only five decisive, or "permanently operating," factors: solidity of the rear, moral spirit of the army, number and quality of divisions, armaments, and organizational ability of the leading staff.
2. The position that emerged in 1955 was that strategic surprise could under certain conditions determine the outcome of a war, but could not be decisive "against a strong, well-prepared opponent."
3. More than a year after the Soviet ICBM test, following calls in the military press for an updating of military doctrine in the light of the ICBM, a Soviet colonel argued for what would amount to a complete reversal of Stalinist doctrine on surprise--for elevation of the surprise factor to the status of a "permanently operating" one that can decide the outcome of a war. In the 11 December 1958 SOVIET FLEET, Colonel Sidorov contended that the Stalinist thesis on permanently operating factors should not be regarded as rigid dogma; he acknowledged that strategic surprise was not "accepted" as a permanently operating factor, but argued that it "must" now be so recognized.

Sidorov's argument has never been repeated in Soviet media, although there have been a few less direct indications that the surprise factor may be occupying a greater role in the thinking of Soviet military writers: Articles in SOVIET FLEET and IZVESTIA shortly after the August 1957 ICBM test announcement spoke unequivocally of the ICBM as a weapon of surprise. And Colonel Korotkov in the 12 August 1958 SOVIET FLEET implied that surprise attack could be decisive strategically--that the "time factor" must be considered in regard to "the intentions of a probable opponent" and that "to be late... with counteractions may in many cases mean defeat... on a strategic scale."

Counterbalancing these references are others that have adhered to the 1955 doctrinal position. The sum total of discussions of surprise attack has been very small, with circumspection a necessary outgrowth of the USSR's standard propaganda position that it would never start a war. In discussions of the efficacy of surprise at the tactical level, military writers assign to the surprise factor a high probability of decisiveness in modern war conditions. But such discussions do not necessarily reflect thinking as to the decisiveness of surprise at the strategic level.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

- 2 -

STRATEGIC SURPRISE: INDICATIONS OF A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE
IN SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE

Strategic surprise is discussed only infrequently and in the most circumspect terms in Soviet propaganda media, both military and civilian. The traditional and unaltered propaganda position is that the USSR would never launch a preventive war or a surprise attack--a propaganda posture that automatically imposes limitations on any discussion of the efficacy of strategic surprise.

There is, however, fragmentary propaganda evidence (1) that the acquisition of a swift intercontinental striking capability has given rise to reassessment of Soviet strategic doctrine and (2) that there has been some evolution beyond the last--1955--doctrinal revision toward a still higher estimate of the efficacy of surprise attack in a global war.

More specifically, there are indications that at least some Soviet military strategists may believe that a surprise attack with ICBMs and long-range rockets carrying thermonuclear warheads could provide the basis for a successful blitzkrieg against the West.

BACKGROUND: The 1955 Doctrinal Revision

Stalinist doctrine, which had held sway from 1942 until about 1955, had regarded strategic surprise (such as Hitler's surprise invasion of the USSR) as temporarily advantageous, but in no case decisive in determining the outcome of the war. The outcome of wars, according to Stalin's thesis, was determined by five "permanently operating factors"--the solidity of the rear, the moral spirit of the army, the number and quality of divisions, armaments, and the organizational abilities of the leading military staff.

After Stalin's death, a group of Soviet marshals sought to bring the doctrine more into line with the new mass-destruction weapons capability. The view that they fostered--and which apparently became the dominant one in 1955--was that strategic surprise could influence the direction a war would take and could even be decisive given insufficient strength or preparedness on the part of the opponent. Put another way, the 1955 position was that while contemporary weapons facilitate surprise attack and would render such an attack extremely destructive, it is not possible to win over a strong, well-prepared opponent by blitzkrieg or by weapons of mass destruction alone.*

* For a detailed discussion of the 1955 doctrinal revision, see Radio Propaganda Reports CD.30 of 15 June 1955, "General Shatilov on Surprise Atomic Attack: "A Double-Edged Weapon", and RS.5 of 27 July 1955, "Politics and Doctrinal Differences among the Soviet Military Elite."

CONFIDENTIAL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

~~- 3 -~~

The Stalinist formula about permanently operating factors was not only not repudiated in 1955, but was frequently reiterated in military writings. Even Tank Marshal Rotmistrov, one of the most outspoken of the revisers of doctrine, conceded that "the permanently operating factors, in the final analysis, have always decided and will always decide the course and outcome of war." No attempt was made in 1955 to elevate strategic surprise to the status of a permanently operating factor.

The ICBM's Impact on Doctrine

Since August 1957, military press articles have for the most part adhered to the standard position that emerged in 1955. No Soviet marshal has made a public statement out of step with that position. Military press articles have however, spoken of the "further development of Soviet strategic science" in general, and a number of military commentators have stated directly that the USSR's ICBM capability has spurred a reassessment of strategic doctrine. Of these commentators, some have gone on to endorse the orthodox posture toward strategic surprise, while others have deviated from the standard position.

1. One writer took note in June 1958, in a MILITARY HERALD article, of "a sudden upheaval, or even revolution, that is now taking place in military affairs" as a consequence of the "stormy quantitative and qualitative development of military technology." (But the author, Colonel Baz, followed this up with the conventional line that a surprise attack using weapons of mass destruction could not by itself be decisive against a strong and well-prepared opponent.)
2. In the 5 August 1958 RED STAR Major General G. Pokrovskiy wrote that new means of warfare were changing "the whole strategic aspect of contemporary armed struggle." (In other writings in 1956 and 1957, Pokrovskiy took a fresh view of the impact of rocket weapons on strategic surprise, maintaining that they are an ideal weapon for--and consequently enhance the role of--surprise attack.)
3. In the 12 August 1958 SOVIET AVIATION, Colonel Korotkov observed that the appearance of new weapons was changing the character of war "in a fundamental manner." (Korotkov strongly implied in the same article that surprise attack under modern conditions of warfare could be decisive on a strategic as well as on a tactical scale.)
4. And Colonel Sidorov in the 11 December 1958 SOVIET FLEET wrote that "Soviet military science has waged and will continue to wage a relentless struggle against all kinds of fixed laws that hamper the advance of military affairs." He insisted that "dogmatism..., particularly on the principles of strategy, is organically alien to Soviet military science... /because/ the principles of the art of war change with the changing conditions of armed struggle." (In this article, Sidorov advanced the new argument that while strategic surprise was not "accepted" as a "permanently operating factor" that decides wars, Soviet military science "must" consider it as one.)

While all these writers thus agree that Soviet military doctrine is evolving or must evolve in such a way as to accommodate to the new

DECLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Authority

NND45358

BSA

NARA Date

8/20/09

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

- 4 -

weapons capability, they take divergent approaches to the question of what role surprise attack is to occupy. Examined in detail below are the statements that depart from the standard line, reflecting a higher appraisal of the efficacy of strategic surprise: These are Pokrovskiy's, which defines the ICBM as a weapon of surprise, and Korotkov's and Sidorov's, which argue--the former obliquely and the latter directly--for recognition of the possible decisiveness of strategic surprise attack under modern conditions of warfare.

1. Treatment of Strategic Rocket as Surprise Weapon

Almost immediately after the TASS announcement of a successful Soviet ICBM test, Major General Pokrovskiy* unequivocally defined the strategic rocket as a surprise weapon. In an IZVESTIA article on 31 August, Pokrovskiy said that

if the rocket, or specifically its warhead--which had been freed from the engine--travels at a speed of, say, six kilometers per second, and if it is discovered by radar at a distance of, say, 300 kilometers from the target, that leaves 50 seconds until the moment of explosion. This time is insufficient even to sound the usual air raid alarm. Therefore the blow dealt by the explosion of the rocket turns out in practice to be absolutely sudden, and the effectiveness of such a blow increases correspondingly.

The chief of the space flight section of the Central Air Club, N. Varvarov, in a 30 August 1957 SOVIET FLEET article on ICBMs, made the same point: "By virtue of their speed and altitude, ICBMs can deal surprise blows on anyone."

Pokrovskiy's IZVESTIA article contained what amounted to a claim that "vital military centers on the American continent" could be destroyed by a "surprise rocket attack":

[Up until Soviet acquisition of ICBM capability], the military specialists of countries across the ocean assumed that in case of a war in Europe or Asia the vital military centers of the countries on the American continent could not be destroyed by a surprise rocket attack. On this basis it was assumed that the system of bases created by the United States in Europe and Asia would ensure, in case of war, the striking of any country in Europe and Asia not only by aircraft but also by rockets, while at the same time U.S. territory would be kept outside the range of these rockets.

The emergence of an intercontinental rocket radically changes this situation. Now not a single aggressor,

* G. I. Pokrovskiy, Major General in the Technical Engineering Service and professor in the Zhukovskiy Military-Aerial Engineering Academy, is essentially a scientist who writes frequently on rocketry and modern warfare.

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

- 5 -

anywhere on the globe, can escape the retaliatory blows of the rockets carrying powerful nuclear charges and reaching their military targets suddenly and accurately.

This passage is in keeping with the basic propaganda line in that it speaks of "retaliation" against an "aggressor" and stops short of entertaining the possibility of a Soviet surprise attack against the United States. But Pokrovskiy leaves no ambiguity about the point that a surprise strategy could be devastatingly effective if used against the United States.

Almost a full year before the Soviet ICBM test, Pokrovskiy had seemed to be anticipating a revision upward of the estimate of the surprise factor in war, in his book "Science and Technology in Modern War" published in October 1956. When the book appeared, the USSR was already on record with claims that its armed forces were equipped with "long-range" rocket weapons.* Pokrovskiy declared that "the long-range missile practically assures the surprise delivery of a blow against distant targets."

Although rockets and surprise had been linked as far back as 1952 in articles in the Soviet military press, such linkage had always been in the context of depreciation of a U.S. blitzkrieg strategy. Now Pokrovskiy underscored the crippling effect that a surprise first strike would have on an opponent, with no qualifier about the strength or readiness of the defenders:

A massive blow with long-range missiles which an aggressor deals by surprise in an attack on any peaceful country can be very powerful because the missile launchers and the missiles on these launchers can be secretly prepared in peacetime without the possibility of their discovery and destruction by the defenders.

All this indicates that long-range missiles, which are one of the newest means of conflict, appreciably elevate the role of surprise in modern warfare.

2. New Argument for Decisiveness of Surprise

Although Soviet military writers have acknowledged that surprise attack has become more effective under modern conditions, none has come out explicitly with a statement that surprise nuclear attack alone could win a war against a strong opponent. On the contrary, some serious discussions of doctrine have reaffirmed the standard 1955 position: Thus Colonel Baz, in MILITARY HERALD No. 6 of 1958, declared that even many Western military leaders who envisage a war as starting with a series of powerful surprise nuclear blows "do not consider it possible to win a war against a well-prepared

* The USSR has claimed possession since February 1956 of long-range rockets--strategic weapons designed to strike "deep in the enemy's rear." Only in August 1957 was a distinction drawn between long-range and super-long-range weapons (ICBM's). Thus, Pokrovskiy wrote in the 31 August 1957 IZVESTIA that "ordinary long-range rockets permit operation in the confines of a single continent or at least within continents that are close to each other--for instance, in the area of Europe, Asia Minor, and North Africa. Such rockets cannot

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

Authority NND45358
By SSA NARA Date 8/20/09

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

- 6 -

and strong opponent either by blitzkrieg or with the help solely of means of mass destruction." This argument was in keeping with the qualifier in Tank Marshal Rotmistrov's RED STAR article of 24 March 1955 upgrading the importance of strategic surprise: "Surprise, however, cannot yield a conclusive result, cannot bring victory in a war with a serious and strong enemy."

Similarly, Major General Talenskiy wrote in the August 1958 INTER-NATIONAL AFFAIRS that

modern weapons of war, chiefly long-range ballistic missiles and strategic aircraft, facilitate surprise attack. But at the same time, a modern major war cannot be restricted to the use of these weapons alone. We cannot imagine that a world war, if the aggressors unleash it in the foreseeable future, will take the form of a duel with ballistic missiles fired from deep within the protagonists' interior.*

But other writers have departed somewhat from the standard posture. Although Colonel I. Korotkov in the 12 August 1958 SOVIET AVIATION went no further than his colleagues in stating that under modern conditions surprise attack has become more dangerous, his treatment of the "time factor" conveyed the impression that a successful surprise attack could be decisive strategically as well as tactically: Korotkov warned that "to be late...with counteractions may in many cases mean defeat not only on an operational, but also on a strategic scale." This statement could be taken to mean not only that the USSR must be prepared to launch prompt retaliatory blows, but also that it must be ready to launch a preemptive strike. He did not specify that the situation requiring counteraction was an actual enemy attack. Rather, he asserted that the "time factor" must be considered both from the point of view of one's own intentions "and in respect to the intentions of a probable opponent," suggesting that his warning about prompt counteraction referred to an imminent enemy attack.

Colonel P. Sidorov, an occasional writer on doctrinal themes, has come closest to saying flatly that a strategic surprise attack could decide a nuclear war--in his 11 December 1958 SOVIET FLEET article which, for the first time in Soviet media, included surprise among the "permanently operating factors" that determine a war's outcome. Sidorov acknowledged that surprise was not now "accepted" as a "permanently operating factor," but argued that it "must" now be so considered. As if engaged in a polemic, he contended that

as a result of the unprecedented progress of contemporary means of war, above all of atomic weapons, jet planes

* It was Maj. Gen. Talenskiy who, in November 1953, made the first bold departure from the traditional Stalinist military doctrine when he suggested in the General Staff organ MILITARY THOUGHT that surprise could, but not necessarily would, determine the outcome of war.

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
1959

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

- 7 -

and rockets, surprise has now in effect already been turned into a permanently operating factor and this situation must be considered by military science.

Sidorov insisted that the Stalinist thesis on "permanently operating factors" that determine the outcome of war should not be treated as "rigid dogma"--that it should be enlarged to include not only the factor of surprise but the science and technology that had made the radically new weapons systems possible.

The rubric "permanently operating factors" fell into disuse after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in February 1956, the "factors" themselves were retained in doctrinal discussions, but were referred to as "fundamental" or "decisive" factors and attributed to Lenin rather than to Stalin. Sidorov's revival of Stalin's actual doctrinal catchphrase, along with the argument that it should be broadened to include strategic surprise, is thus a new departure in Soviet doctrinal writing. His argument, if incorporated into military doctrine would carry the 1955 revision of Stalinist dogma the last step to complete reversal of the thesis that surprise attack can never decide a war. So far, however, no endorsement or rebuttal of Sidorov's argument has appeared in Soviet media.

High Appraisal of Surprise Factor at Tactical Level

In discussions of a hypothetical war already in progress--discussions that bypass the propagandistically sensitive issue of who would start the hostilities--Soviet military writers give the surprise factor a high probability of decisiveness in determining the outcome of a military engagement, whether on a single battlefield or over an entire front. Freed in such discussions of the limitations imposed by the mass propaganda's insistence that the USSR would never start a war, military commentators place a high valuation on the surprise factor in a tactical situation. The following statements from the military press are typical:

"The Requirements of Contemporary Warfare Must Be the Basis of the Training and Education of Soldiers," by Colonel General A. Radzievskiy in the 8 February 1958 RED STAR:

As never before, surprise and impetus have a decisive importance in attacks. Therefore, in working out this or that tactical task, it is important to learn to carry out all battle preparations under cover, within the briefest possible time, to display versatility in issuing orders, and to utilize fully during the battle the entire power of artillery, air force, and other means of neutralizing the enemy.

"Maneuvers are the Soul of Contemporary Battle," by Army General I. Fedyuninskiy in the 15 May 1958 RED STAR:

Mighty atomic blows permit the certain destruction of the enemy by surprise, not only directly at the front but also at a considerable distance to the rear, providing the scope for artful and bold envelopment and outflanking and for deep penetration. In this connection, wide-scale combat maneuvers are now even more important than before.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority NND45358

By SSA NARA Date 8/20/09

CONFIDENTIAL

PROPAGANDA REPORT
11 MAY 1959

- 8 -

In executing the battle, the commander must direct the subordinate units firmly and consistently and devise surprise attacks on the enemy.

"Surprise in Attack," by Colonel S. Grigoryev in MILITARY HERALD No. 8, 1958:

Surprise has been considered in all armies ~~as~~ ^{the} most important factor in attaining success in battle. In our time, its role is growing still greater. Surprise actions in contemporary warfare allow very large losses to be incurred by the enemy, sharply lowering their fighting ability, weakening their willpower, destroying their leadership, while at the same time creating favorable conditions for the decisive smashing of their strength.

"The Success of Battle Is Decided in the First Attack," by Colonel N. Kalei in the 4 September 1958 RED STAR:

The decisive condition for the success of the first attack is surprise. In such a case the enemy is taken unawares, is incapable of defending himself effectively. Attacking thus provides favorable conditions for maneuver, accurate fire for certain defeat.

"The Time Factor in Battle," by Lieutenant Colonel P. Babichev in the 16 October 1958 RED STAR:

The wide introduction of the newest military and technical means of combat has sharply changed the nature of contemporary war....

In such a fashion the speed of the unit's activity, its skill in effecting maneuvers in defense is the decisive factor in the conduct of battle.

"Surprise in Air Battle," by Lieutenant Colonel V. Fedidov in the 23 September 1958 SOVIET AVIATION:

Surprise is one of the most important sides of the art of conducting aerial battle..

"Against Low-Speed Operations," by Colonel A. Logushkin and Major A. Kondakov in the 3 March 1959 RED STAR:

The new means of mass destruction require the introduction into troop practice of forms of combat based on bold, well-thought-out maneuvers at high speed. It is necessary to eliminate resolutely the tactic of low speeds and the linear formation of the battle order, utilize every opportunity for penetrating deeply into the enemy defenses, into his flanks and rear.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

Authority

NND45358

By

SA NARA Date

8/20/09